

# Christian Meditations,

Sc. Sc.



[Price Eighteen Pence.]

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1851

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*S. Smith*

# Christian Meditations.

B Y T H E

Late ARCHDUTCHESS  
MARY ELIZABETH,

Daughter of the Infant DUKE of  
PARMA, and Consort of the  
ARCHDUKE JOSEPH, now  
KING of the ROMANS.

From the ORIGINAL Printed at VIENNA  
by AUTHORITY.



L O N D O N:

Printed for J. N O U R S E,  
Opposite Catherine-Street, in the Strand.  
Bookseller to His MAJESTY,  
M. DCC. LXIV.

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BY THE

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Printed by J. W. Moore,  
Opposite Christ Church, in the Strand.  
Sold by the Booksellers.  
M. DCC. LXXXV.

P R E F A C E.

**T**HE illustrious princess, whose name adorns the title page of these religious meditations; had no motive of vanity or ambition in committing them to writing. They were designed only for her own private use, that is, for the employment of those precious hours, which she annually stole, as it were, from the pomp and grandeur of a court; to devote herself more immediately to the study of her salvation. As she had given years, she used to say, to her body; it was but just to bestow a few hours on her soul. Self-conversation she looked upon as a practice of the utmost importance, for the amendment of our lives, and our improvement in virtue. It was a practice observed even by the Pythagoreans, who obliged their followers to examine their consciences thrice a day, and to enquire most minutely not only into the bad actions they had committed

## P R E F A C E.

mitted, but into the good ones which they might happen to have neglected. If such was the practice of Pagans, how shameful is it for christians, possessed of such superior advantages, to be so averse from entering into a spiritual retirement! How shameful, not to allow themselves a few hours for the most important business of life; while whole days, nay whole years are wasted in trifling diversions, or perhaps in vicious excesses! May the taste of those divine truths, which are here set in so clear a light, never be lost in any idle dissipations: but rendered subservient to our good conduct in life, and our future welfare and happiness!



CHRIS-





## CHRISTIAN MEDITATIONS.

### MEDITATION I.

O F

### *ANNUAL RETIREMENT.*

F I R S T,

I T S U T I L I T Y.

**O**F all concerns which we can have in this world, undoubtedly, the most important and the only one in which we should always be employed, is our salvation: otherwise there can be no true happiness for us. Years pass away, so that we find ourselves at the gate of eternity, destitute of any merit; and woe to us, if we are come thither by the way of perdition! then our case is irretrievable, and our happiness or misery

B

eternal.



eternal. Yet how few apply themselves to this important concern? death comes and surprises them.

Art not thou of this number, O my soul? Dost thou, amidst the dissipation of the world, find any time for serious reflections? Dost thou so much as seek it? No, not at all. Thou art so incessantly taken up with external objects, that thou troublest thyself very little about what will one day befall thee. Thou art averse to recollection; retirement is what thou canst not bear: however, do but consider its usefulness, and that may reconcile thee to it. Death is drawing nearer and nearer every instant; but that which is to put an end to thy exile, is unknown to thee. It may be far off; it may be at hand. Man's greatest happiness is to be ready to leave the world. To prepare for it, when forced to it, is not the thing: we must ever and continually be so.

One of the great advantages of this retirement, O my soul! is, that it gives thee time for reflection; no outward object disturbs thee: it is a season consecrated to God. And

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is it not fit that, amidst so many days spent in dissipation and pleasures, some should be devoted to him? This retirement teaches thee to withdraw from the creatures: here thou learnest to spend some moments apart from the intercourse of men, and in an union with thy God. O inconceivable happiness! This should fill thee with ardent longings after those days of recollection, which alone thou canst look on to be days well spent; as, in reality, the only true good is to be solely taken up with God and our salvation.

Hast thou never, O my soul! felt the exceeding utility of this retirement? Hast thou never panted after eternal happiness? Thy indifference and coldness herein, shews thee to have little considered it, and how very little thou layest thy salvation to heart: that salvation which ought to be thy only business: that salvation, which, if thou wilt mind it, will make thee eternally happy.

SECONDLY,  
ITS NECESSITY.

**I**T is not enough, O my soul, that this retirement is a remedy to thy distempers, and of such great help and relief to thee. It is likewise necessary for thy salvation, and even indispensibly so. All day long we float on the current of the world: the whole day is taken up with trifles; and herein all days are alike. In vain we would from time to time bestow a thought on God and eternity: alas! the mind is so dissipated that we cannot bring it to serious reflection. Before we have had time to compose ourselves, the instant, intended for it, is past and gone: we would not for the world forego a diversion, to improve the happy disposition we were in for reflecting on truths so august and interesting, as those which religion teaches us. Besides, the levity of our mind frustrates all the preparations we had made: the time fixed is elapsed: dissipation returns: and we are no longer able to collect our senses. But here we imagine to find an expedient: we reflect, we meditate on the  
most

most striking truths, but sparing ourselves the trouble of recollection; and the consequence is, that they make no impression on us. We believe that this proceeds from a clearness of conscience. What a lamentable mistake is this! How should they make any impression on a mind, much more intent on the world and its allurements, than on the subject of meditation, which it views as mere matter of form, and even without dwelling on its most essential points? This is dreadful, O my soul: and what remedy remains? If the most tremendous truths do not strike thee, what will become of thee, and what means can be made use of for reclaiming thee? The delights of holiness, are of no avail; thou seest no beauty in them, when sensitive objects display their false allurements. The world triumphs, not the dread of death, of judgment, and of hell can withhold thee. What is to be done? This very thing proves the necessity of retirement. It is retirement alone which can set thee to rights. Thou findest thyself for some days removed from all communication with what is most dear to thee; this time thou art resolved wholly to employ in meditation and examination



## 6            N E C E S S I T Y.

mination of thy conscience: and the space of a few days is the term thou hast fixed for these devout exercises. Now thou seest thyself compelled to reflect. Then it is thou findest time for recollection, and that thou learnest to profit by thy thoughts; then it is that thou comest to a fight of thy guilt and deplorest it before God; then it is that thou discourest with him; and that thou art taught to know how adorable he is. In a word, it is then, that thou formest resolutions for thy future conduct, which tend to thy salvation. Without this retirement, thou wouldst never have felt the force of some truths; without it, thou wouldst never have departed from thy irregularities: still hadst thou continued in thy favourite vices. Acknowledge, therefore, the necessity of an annual retirement, by which thou, at least, consecratest to God every year, some days, to be employed in a manner becoming thy nature, and conducive to thy greatest happiness.

THIRD.



## THIRDLY,

## ITS DELIGHTFULNESS. .

**B**UT what, my soul, should likewise make thee ardently desire those days of retirement and solitude, when thou livest only to thyself, when thou art wrapped up in God and thy salvation, are the delights enjoyed in them: ineffable delights, as proceeding from God alone; as the author of them is the supreme ruler of the universe; as tending to him only, and as the fruits of divine love. Say, O my soul, hast thou never felt that inward delight, which the Holy Spirit imparts to a faithful heart? Hast thou never been inflamed by this divine fire? Didst thou ever meet with it in thy acquaintance with the creatures? No, not with any thing like it; not with any thing which can be in any wise compared to it.

Has God never spoke to thee in this season of recollection? His voice thou hast often heard; but thou knowest not how to make a suitable use of it. Who can express the profound consolations springing from it! But

## 8 DELIGHTFULNESS.

I am aware of what stops thee. Thou art afraid of not finding in retirement those pleasures, which, perhaps, thou tastedst in thy guiltless years: thou hast since, perhaps, often strove to meditate, but thy barrenness has diverted thee from any farther pursuit. Thou art not worthy, sayest thou, of such sublime favours; but is it not thy want of recollection, thy coldness, thy supinity, which have hindered thee from attaining to this happiness? God is gracious, he has thy good in view, he desires to impart himself to thee; he only waits till thou wilt listen when he speaks to thee. Thou mayest, if thou wilt, enjoy all those divine consolations; it depends only on thyself: receive them, therefore, with devout transports. Oh retirement, my only delight! Oh retirement; where I live only to God! Oh retirement, rich fountain of all heavenly delights! when shall I be able to enjoy thee? When, sequestered from the world, shall I, in thy quiet bosom, discourse face to face with my God, undisturbed by any worldly ideas?

Lord, who seeest the dispositions of my heart, be pleased to inspire me more and  
more

## DELIGHTFULNESS. 9

more with the love of retirement. Under thy influence, Oh, may those days, which I consecrate to thee, be strictly laid out in holy exercises! May the reflections I shall there make on the state of my conscience and thy sacred truths, be, for the future, a preservative from all sin, and create in me a lively repentance for all my past offences: may they raise in me such a love and attachment to thee, as shall for ever wean me from the creatures, and make me diligently improve every moment of my life for my salvation! But especially, O my God, give me such an inward recollection, as nothing may scatter or disorder, and which may enable me to employ the remaining part of my life in steadfast piety.



MEDI-

MEDITATION II.  
ON LUKE-WARMNESS.

F I R S T,

It is an IMPERFECT STATE.

**H**OW is it with thee, Oh my soul? Art thou quiet and easy? Tassest thou that peace which constitutes the only true happiness; those delights which arise from an irreproachable behaviour; that calm which is felt when the passions are suppressed; that unction which the love of God sheds abroad? Whence is it, that thou art thus faint, languid and disquieted? Where are that fervour, those fore-tastes of heaven, those raptures of a life taken up with God? Surely, nothing should be able to disturb thy repose: thy passions are still; and thy faults thou lookest upon as slight and pardonable. Art thou then in that state of obduracy, which is the result of habitual guilt? Art thou deaf to the cries of thy conscience? Thou canst not exceed in accusing thyself for sins, which have carried thee such lengths. Yet thou art not insensible to the idea of guilt; it strikes thee with



with horror. In what state art thou then? I see thou makest thyself easy. That of luke-warmness, sayest thou. Alas! should that quiet thee! that imperfect state! Consider, O my soul, the inactivity into which it throws thee: if not criminal, at least it incapacitates thee from doing good; for what good can be done in this kind of languor and lethargy? This state likewise deprives thee of all consolation: it renders thee undeserving of it. How canst thou expect that heaven will shower down on thee those favours, which are the peculiar portion of fervour and fidelity? It makes thee perform every duty with disgust and backwardness and makes thee omit, because something troublesome, practices, which would be highly useful to thee. The very trouble thou feelest in them, should be a proof to thee of the imperfection of thy state, and put thee on sparing no efforts to extricate thyself.

Findest thou in that state any thing commendable, pleasant or engaging? The wearisomeness and reluctance which it sheds on all devotional observances, the perpetual struggles when any duty is to be discharged, should



should not these be motives of sufficient power to make thee shake off thy listlessness? Wilt thou continue dozing in it? Wilt thou never rise to love and action? Wilt thou for ever give up thyself to this alarming torpor? Wilt thou, a foe to thyself, continue in this supineness, of itself so uneasy? Wilt thou prefer a state of imperfection to one more perfect? Dost thou see it to be such? If thou hast seriously reflected on it, canst thou be mistaken?

Luke-warmness is a disease of the soul, as a continual heaviness is of the body. The latter is dreaded, and every thing immediately done to get rid of it; exercise, physick, nothing is left untried: but the former is not combated; it is not minded. Oh my soul, reflect thou on it, and delay thy recovery not a moment: thou hast been created for perfection; thou art made to serve and love God: quit then a state, the imperfection of which affects even thyself; a state which equally disables thee from discharging thy duties towards God, and towards thy neighbour.

SECOND-

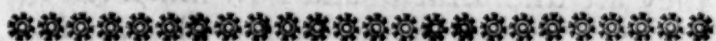
## SECONDLY,

## It is a DANGEROUS STATE.

WERE luke-warmness merely an imperfect state, I could excuse the easiness with which some lax and indifferent christians continue in it; and, though every imperfection should be avoided, it would be wrong to wonder that the weakness of our nature withholds us in it: but every imperfection is dangerous, all luke-warmness is hurtful. Findest thou not, O my soul, even in this very languor, something that should make thee dread it? This state, indeed, is not criminal, is not a state in which hell is to be feared; but does not its greatest danger lye in this very security? Consider the progresses of luke-warmness; consider the difference thou findest in thyself, between thy present state and the time, when it began. Where is that fervour which made every thing easy to thee? where that punctuality in the discharge of thy duties? that zeal for the service of God? And this is not all: thou wast aware of thy fervour cooling. At first, this feeling gave thee pain, and thou sighedst

fighedst after the sacred delights, of which thou sawest thyself deprived: insensibly it grew to a habit in thee. Yet, amidst all thy repugnancy to discharge thy duties, thou didst not omit them; but soon after they became insupportable to thee: when thou didst observe them, it was superficially; at length, no longer looking on them as indispensable, thou deliberately broughtest thyself to omit them. Satisfied with not doing evil, little didst thou concern thyself about doing good, and still less about doing it rightly: thy strength declined, thy passions gained ground. In the mean time, the devil grows more formidable, and, every instant, which thou losest without endeavouring to force thyself out of this danger, places thee in that of yielding to the least temptation; nay, it may reduce thee to an impossibility of ever getting clear. Farther, the oppositions thou shalt meet with, will dispirit thee: thou wilt not be able to extricate thyself out of this mire, where, every moment, thou art sinking deeper. But the more mayest thou shudder to think that thy luke-warmness and security will drag thee into the eternal fire: for those vices which thou now detestest as  
 most

most infamous, will become familiar to thee. Exert thyself, then, without delay, to get out of this abyfs, into which thou haft precipitated thyself: do not hesitate a fingle moment; the danger is great, the time fhort, perhaps to-morrow, perhaps this very day, it will no longer be in thy power to compafs thy liberty, and death may have cut thy thread. Reflect on thy blindnefs, confider that faults, which now feem to thee flight and beneath notice, are crimes calling for vengeance againft thee. Thou canft not judge of their enormity — they infinuated themfelves infenfibly; at firft they were mere nothings, perhaps they are now at their height: luke-warmnefs hinders thee from being fenfible of their growth, and from judging of their abomination.



### THIRDLY,

#### Sad Confequences of this STATE.

**I** Have before faid, O my foul, that luke-warmnefs will carry thee to the eternal fire: nothing is more certain. The feeds of thy vices will germinate and grow up to fuch  
a de-



a degree, as not to be rooted out : and thou thyself wilt not be alarmed at the luxuriancy of these crimes. The habitual indifference thou hast contracted, will harden thee against a due sense of their great enormity : violent passions are not so much to be feared, as those which time brings forth and foment. Thou wilt remain easy in a state of guilt : the devil, with increased power, will lay insurmountable obstacles against any endeavours thou mayest use for thy deliverance. Shouldst thou not see the horror of thy condition ? God insensibly withdraws his graces, and at length will forsake thee. Hast thou never reflected, O my soul, on the favours thou usedst to receive before thy lapse into this supinuity ? Compare them to those thou now receivest, and thou wilt then see how sadly they are diminished, and how much less impression they make on thee. This proceeds from the justice of heaven : thou hast despised them, and thus rendered thyself unworthy of them. However, admire the divine mercy which still offers thee a sufficiency of them, for awakening thee out of thy lethargy. It was so, at that happy time, when thou, with ready obedience, didst follow the voice



voice of God; he heaped favours on thee: those inexpressible delights, felt by thee in prayer, when, after thy lingerings in sterility and coldness, he foresaw that thy weakness would prevail; that strength with which he supplied thee, when near yielding to temptation, thou madest him thy refuge; that courage, which bore crosses with serenity, with pleasure; that firmness in afflictions: all these, I say, were given to thee. As luke-warmness gained ground in thee, thy crosses became insupportable, and thy passions above controul: thou feltest thyself deprived of the solacements enjoyed by a fervent soul; and now thou canst not but feel every day, that grace has been withdrawing, and that thy danger increases. Come forth then from so perilous a state: awake, rouse thyself, behold the sad consequences of such a sleep, exert thyself to avoid them. Why wilt thou persist in damning thyself? Break off these dreadful procrastinations. Art thou sure of a single instant? Art thou sure thou shalt be able to extricate thyself from thy

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present danger? Rather, O my soul, lament thy having continued so long in it: tremble at the sight of the time which thou hast lost, and apply thyself to recover it. Embrace, while it is yet in thy power, the infinite mercy of that God, who became incarnate and died for our salvation.

O God of transcendent goodness, thou who seekest my wretchedness, have pity, I beseech thee, on a soul which thou thyself didst create, and after thy likeness. Wilt thou forsake it now, whilst it is imploring thy mercy? I am indeed weak, but my very weakness pleads for me: I can do nothing without thee. The lethargy in which I have so long lain, has deprived me of all strength. I lament that I have so long abused thy manifold goodness, and so long resisted the graces of thy spirit: but as I now return to thee full of sorrow, as I now lay before thee my inability, be pleased, O Lord, to help me; draw me back by thy almighty hand from the edge of the abyss, into which I was going to throw myself. Henceforth it is  
only

only thou that I will love and serve;  
and, amidst all my disgust and repug-  
nancy, to act up to my duty, with a full  
confidence in thee, I will make all possi-  
ble efforts, sure of victory under thy graci-  
ous protection. Amen.



MEDITATION III.  
On Preparation for DEATH;

F I R S T

To persuade Ourselves that we shall  
D I E.

**T**HAT we are all one day to die, is certain; and equally certain is it, that the consequences of death are most terrible, for every one who shall have lived in guilt. So that we cannot exceed in precaution and diligence, rightly to prepare ourselves for a moment, on which depends a blissful or miserable eternity. Preparation for death, of all other exercises, is the fittest for alleviating it to us; and this preparation must begin by persuading ourselves that we shall die. For, O my soul, we can scarce bring ourselves strictly to prepare for that, which we are not yet persuaded of; and though its consequences were to be terrible and irretrievable as those of death, it is hardly in our nature, without a strong conviction of it, to apply ourselves with all our might to the preparation



tion it demands. But, O my soul, what I here urge concerning the necessity of this persuasion, thou accountest pusillanimity and folly. Thou knowest that divine justice has pronounced death against sinful men; yet, Oh inaccountable infatuation! thou puttest all thought of death far from thee, and thou livest, on this earth, as if that sentence did not concern thee, as if thou and thy body were never to be separated. But what do I say? Thou canst not but know that one day thou shalt be forced out of it, that no one is exempted from this common tribute. Thou comfortest thyself, perhaps, with the hopes, that however it will not be to-day, nor to-morrow, nor perhaps this year, and thus thou livest in security. Alas! it is through security that death comes as a surprise to the generality of men. Consider, O my soul, the effect which thy imagined persuasion of the mortality of this body, thy present tenement, has on thee, and thou wilt find that thou still doubtest of it. Thou thinkest on death, but the thought is so horrible to thee, that thou immediately drivest it away. Thou thinkest on death,

but thou canst not deprive thyself for one instant of a pleasure, which, perhaps, will trouble thee at thy last hours. Thou thinkest on death, but thy ambition is busied in vast projects, as if futurity was at thy disposal, as if thou couldst prolong life at pleasure. Lastly, thou thinkest on death, but this thought, instead of its raising in thee a salutary fear, thou makest it a motive to indulge present enjoyments. Now what does all this prove but that thou art not persuaded of death? For a real persuasion of death would determine thee to think and seriously say to thyself: I shall die, my hour draws near; I shall die, and it will be at an age, when I least expect it; and, in a manner, the least foreseen. Such is the persuasion which determines us, without delay, to fervent and generous resolutions of amending our life, the more effectually to think on our end: and wretched art thou, O my soul, if contrary to the express terms of the Gospel, contrary to the threatnings of Jesus Christ, thou art not yet persuaded of it. Therefore, let me commend to thee to think on it continually,  
and

and to lay it to heart, and thereby begin to prepare thyself for that tremendous instant.

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SECONDLY,

Watchfulness against DEATH.

**W**HAT a happiness, O my soul, could a preservative against death be found; could we, notwithstanding its uncertainty, elude it; could we, in some measure, by advising us to alter its disposition, and, with all its deceitfulness, put it out of its power to surprise us! And such a preservative we are possessed of. This important secret our Saviour himself has graciously communicated to us: WATCH. And, indeed, to fortify ourselves against death, and meet its surprises, what can be more necessary and effectual than watchfulness? Take a view, O my soul, of the great benefit of such watchfulness. Whatever we do, still the particular circumstances of death will be ever uncertain; but, however uncertain it be of itself, however hidden the circumstances which will attend it, it is

## 24 Watchfulness against DEATH.

in thy power that it shall never surprife thee. We may enquire and examine, we may use all poffible endeavours, for feeing into futurity; and ftill the time, the place, and kind of death, will remain unknown: but without any knowledge of them, thou mayeft live fo, that there fhall be no time when it will not find thee on thy guard, no place where thou art not out of the reach of its fnares, no kind of death, in which thou canft not take proper meafures againft its furprifing thee. What great benefits are thefe! but then how great thy blindnefs, in not making ufe of them! For, O my foul, in this very uncertainty of death, the providence of God is to be admired: how dreadful foever it be in other refpects; in the effect it produces, it is falutary. Thereby it is, that God keeps us in order, and obliges us continually to watch over our actions. Accordingly, to lay afide this watchfulnefs for a moment, is acting againft all the principles and all the lights of reafon. Why fo? becaufe it is leaving a whole eternity to a fingle moment.



## Practical Knowledge of DEATH. 25

O my soul, how often hast thou strayed from this disposition! How often hast thou forgotten death! Bewail thy blindness, and henceforth be watchful. The advantages of being so, are now shewn to thee. Art thou not impressed by them? Wilt thou prefer an instant of frivolous pleasure, to an eternity of exalted felicity?



T H I R D L Y,

## Practical Knowledge of DEATH.

**W**E may learn to die well; and this is indisputably the most noble and excellent science, next to that of God, if, however, it be separable from it. There is a noviciate for death, and in this noviciate it is that Saints were formed: the whole care of their life was to study death. Accordingly, as we naturally do well what we have thoroughly learned and long practised; they died as Saints, because they were thoroughly versed in the knowledge of death. What benefit is this, O my soul! what ground of consolation to thee, that thou mayest study

## 26 Practical Knowledge of DEATH.

study and learn that knowledge, which makes Saints. Take a close survey of life : to the reflective mind it is but a noviciate to death. We die daily, every hour impairs our body, and each successive instant brings us nearer to the grave. This, O my soul, is a certain truth ; then since we are momentarily dying, why do we not habituate ourselves to die voluntarily, and by choice ? Our eyes, indeed, are, as it were, fascinated by present objects : but as a veil hangs over them, we should seek a remedy for this evil in our minds ; and this remedy is nothing else but the thorough conviction that this body, which to us appears full of life, is a perishable body, a dying body.

All the creatures in the universe join in setting us examples of death. If we consult ourselves, every thing tells us that we must die. If we consult all the creatures round us, they teach us the like necessity, leaving us, separating themselves from us, and ceasing to be ours. Oh my soul, how many things teach us that we are continually dying ! To us the pleasures

Practical Knowledge of DEATH. 27

asures of youth are past and gone : yesterday's joy is vanished : the honours formerly paid to us, are at an end ; and as those honours and pleasures have already forsaken us, every thing else is in the like manner forsaking, or will forsake us. How great must be thy stupidity, O my soul, if amidst so many documents, and so many instances of death, thou learnest not to die ! But the leading, the essential motive which should move thee closely to study this practical knowledge, is thy profession of christianity. The christian life, properly speaking, is nothing but a continual death. And what, indeed, is the tendency of all its maxims ? to detach the soul from the body, that is, to sever it from pleasure, sensuality and servitude to the flesh. From these objects the christian life detaches us by mortification, and thus we enter on the practice of dying daily : otherwise, where would be the merit of thy life ? Therefore, O my soul, yield to the impulse, follow the intimations of thy mind : loose thyself from this body of sin ; and consider that the soul which renounces not  
its

## 28 Practical Knowledge of DEATH.

its body till the hour of death, is totally unworthy of the light of God's countenance.

Almighty and most merciful Being, teach me, I entreat thee, this knowledge of death, on which my happiness depends, through which I must be fitted for the eternal enjoyment of thy presence. Oh may thy inexpressible goodness create in me a firm persuasion of death, an incessant watchfulness against it, that in the short remainder of my life I may learn to die, and that these days may be to me a noviciate and preparative for that moment, when my fate will be decided for all eternity. Amen.



MEDI-



# MEDITATION IV.

## Of the LIFE of the WORLD.

### FIRST,

#### It is an IDLE LIFE.

**O**N an attentive survey of the life of the world, it is quite unaccountable that rational creatures should not only bear with it, but give themselves up to it, as the bulk of mankind do: for they forget their most essential duties, and neglect their most important concern, that is, their salvation. And for what do they neglect it? for an idle life, which cannot procure them any real gratification, any solid contentment. But with the multitude, the strength of imagination is such, that the notion they form to themselves of this life, determines them to it; and so far from previously weighing the solidity of this supposed happiness, they consider the real vexations and disappointments connected with it, only as interruptions in their fruition, and as troublesome affairs  
in

intruding on their ease and quiet. But they are very much out in such a conceit; and a little reflection, O my soul, will shew thee its vanity and emptiness. What, indeed, as the first characteristic of worldly life? Undoubtedly, it is idleness: and can such idleness please thee? To be continually taken up with trifles, and vain diversions; never to allow a moment for reflection, this is the life of the world. The soul lies, as it were, interred under the passions: it is deprived of all its privileges; but as that of thought cannot be taken from it, it is employed, on bawbles, which naturally, and without a strange corruption, should have no charms for such a being. Thou hast often experienced the emptiness of pleasure. Those, which thou hast thought the most lively, thou hast soon nauseated: thou hast been surfeited amidst entertainments, plays and balls: nothing has given thee the satisfaction expected. This idleness was not made to charm thee: yet thou hast attributed thy lassitude to reasons, as false as the pleasures thou hast indulged, not reflecting,

flecting, that being created for heaven, the most brilliant, the most alluring objects on earth, as they cannot fix thee, cannot render thee happy. Commune with thyself, and thou wilt understand this truth, and still better wilt thou relish it, if thou wilt bring thyself to the test in solitude and reflection: then shalt thou feel that an idle life is wretchedness in the abstract. Thou shouldst have been alarmed before this; thou shouldst, by this time, have been emerged from it; but alas! idleness, imperfect as it appears to thee, still infatuates thee. Thou seest charms in the life of the world, which gradually vanish on reflection, and which please thee only because hitherto thou hast not taken them into serious consideration. Henceforth then deplore thy blindness.

SECOND-

## SECONDLY,

## It is a RESTLESS LIFE.

**B**UT what should still more powerfully alienate thee, O my soul, are the disquietudes inseparable from it. Amidst people of every temper, so opposite in their humours, so different in their inclinations and ways of thinking; there is no pleasing all without studying, and as it were analyzing them, and then behaving to every one according to his particular turn of mind. What a trouble is here? If we make our happiness to depend on pleasing all; what a source of endless disquietude! There is no such thing as avoiding all chagrins. It is impossible, with the most circumspect behaviour, to secure ourselves from malignant tongues, which delight in giving an ill turn to every thing, and construing the most innocent action into an enormous crime. This is planting daggers in our breast. Unable to comfort ourselves under this keen affliction, we seek relief in a small number of friends: but what



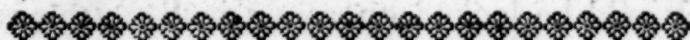
what a slender comfort is this? Besides, on the least traverse, almost all draw back; and very rare is it to find a steady friend. Here is fresh vexation. We had pleased ourselves with having friends: we had done every thing; we had grudged nothing to gain them; we had taken all the pains in the world: the time, however, comes when we discover their ingratitude and falsity; and this, to us, is a stroke scarce to be supported. Yet is this not all. You would be looked on as a friend; a third person comes, and instills suspicions against you: here your self-love is punished in its most sensible part. Perhaps, this turn may be no more than what you have deserved; or, on the contrary, your intentions may have been perfectly just: yet however that be, the case is not the less afflictive.

Haft thou never, O my soul, met with such disappointments in the world, never met with any trouble and vexation in it? I am sure, time after time it has happened, that thy heart has lost what it was most fond of; a hundred times thou hast put the utmost vio-

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lence

lence on thyself, to compass thy desires; and thy projects have often miscarried. After this, canst thou avoid looking on the life of the world as a restless life? Canst thou prefer it to another, which, besides its present repose and joys, will terminate in eternal-happiness? Wilt thou not, from thy own long experience, grow wise? Wilt thou persist in seeking wretchedness? Shake off an idle and restless life, knowing it to be such, and return to thy God.



### THIRDLY,

#### It is a VOLUPTUOUS LIFE.

**W**ERE the life of the world only an idle and restless life, this might be over-looked: but it is the center and seat of all irregularities and vices; and the passions are its only guides. Here the gratification of inordinate desires is an established law: Luxury, hatred, envy, and revenge, have taken the place of exiled virtue: Caprice and self-will are the rules of conduct: Discretion and  
virtue

virtue are looked on as defects: Candour and probity have been driven away: Decorum and modesty are become hateful: In a word, vice stalks about bare-faced, and exploded virtue languishes.

Consider these truths, O my soul! Thou hast long enough been acquainted with the most splendid part of the world, to form an estimate of it. Is salvation thought of there? Are they seriously concerned about it? Is there any earnestness in rightly discharging our duties towards God? Is any regard paid to religion there? or rather, do they not openly make a jest of its most sacred articles? Do they not make it their business to scoff at it, to run it down? But, besides this insolent class of free-thinkers, as they falsely call themselves, is not the world, in general, full of seducements? The life of the world, the least criminal, is a life spent in diversions; and what diversions? Alas! entertainments and plays, where the dresses and dances seem inventions of voluptuousness itself. In plays, the whole

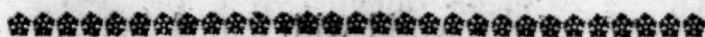
tenour of them usually tends to stimulate the passions, and seduce innocence; and very happy he, who stands his ground amidst such dangers! Even conversation now is a contagion to youth; all modesty is secluded; it turns only on indecencies; the language is double entendres and false witticisms; which, the more offensive to modesty, are the more applauded.

Such is the stile of the age; such, O my soul, the dangers of a worldly life. A voluptuous life was not made for thee: it is pregnant with eternal misery. Examine thyself: art not thou become weaker, since thy living in this depraved world? Then dread lest thou shouldst be carried to flagrant excesses, and make haste to come forth from a state, which will lead thee on to perdition. Fervently thank God for having preserved thee hitherto from such corruption: thou mightest naturally have sunk into every guilt. Mourn those dispositions, which thou feelest, inclining thee to it: shun an infectious air, and look on the  
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the life of the world with settled horror; and this alone can secure thee from the evils, with which thou art threatened. Consider how imperfect and criminal it is; and if thou hast any concern for thy happiness, if thou hast still thy salvation at heart, thou wilt leave it without any regret.

Oh God, who hast given me to know the dangers of the life of the world, its chagrins and disappointments, graciously preserve me from it. Willingly would I betake myself to some sacred asylum, there devoting myself undisturbed to thy service; gladly would I avoid a life, which I cannot think of without shuddering: but as thou thyself hast placed me in the world, and bindest me to it by ties, which I must not break, save me, O save me from its seducements. May my abhorrence of the crimes there held in esteem, henceforth preserve me, to my last gasp, from that poison, which is too often felt to be lurking in its splendours. Amen.



MEDITATION V.  
Of our EXPECTATIONS.

FIRST,  
From the WORLD.

**W**E are perpetually taken up with this deceitful world, which on its side is seducing us, and would drag us into that abyfs of torments, prepared for those who follow its infected ways. For fuch a world we forget an eternity, on which our mind fhould be continually intent; an eternity of good or evil; an eternity, which is not be thought of without fhuddering: yet we turn away from the idea, as sad and troublesome, and fhun every thing, which reminds us of it. Yet had the world things to offer us, which deserved to fix our attachment; were not its goods deceitful and trifling; were a real happinefs to be found in them, or, at leaft, were any advantage to be expected from them; I fhould not think it fo very ftrange, to fee human nature,  
natu-

naturally more propense to enjoy the present than to desire what is only to come, so eager in its conformity to the world. But, besides the sufferings and bitterness of this life, one day or another, we know not how soon, it must have an end; and when our soul shall be separated from our body, of what use will the world be to us?

Consider, O my soul, the vicissitudes of life; let thy imagination dwell on that house, which no longer than yesterday was full of joy, which seemed the abode of every pleasure, where the most splendid and most sprightly company met: now it is a scene of deep sadness, and sighs and lamentations are all that is heard in it. Whence such a sudden change? The accomplished ornament of it, the generous proprietor of it is now a cold and inanimate corpse; his ingenuous face is now wan and disfigured; death has shed its horrors on that house; a corpse now sinking into rottenness and ashes, is its principal object. What a sight is that

to him who is fond of life ! And are all the gay offers of the world come to this ? and can it not exempt thee from a like end ? No, this is a fate, which all mankind must undergo ; and merciless death may, even to-morrow, nay, this very day, lay thee in the like humiliating condition. Thinkest thou, O my soul, that the world can be of any help to thee in this exigency ? Will reason allow thee to conceive that its charms have the power of recalling thee to light, of re-animating this lifeless body ? By what infatuation then dost thou still cleave to this world, which has nothing but discontent and chagrin, and which is not able to preserve for thee that body, which thou so fondly indulgest ? O rather recollect thyself : consider that God alone is thine end ; that he alone can make thee happy ; that the world is full of destructive enticements ; and lament the share it has hitherto had in thy adulterous heart.

SECOND-



SECONDLY,

From its GOODS and PLEASURES.

**T**HE common principle and the strongest tye, which bind us to the world, are its enjoyments and pleasures: every thing in it overflows with joy; plays, balls, sumptuous entertainments, every enticement to voluptuousness, every gratification of desire. We mind only those objects, which give pleasure to the senses; never, in the least, bestowing a thought on those, which might bring us to an acquaintance with ourselves, and convince us of the emptiness and inutility of all those pleasures, even though we would not reflect on their danger.

Consider, O my soul, what these enjoyments are; what these pleasures so much cried up? Continual dissipation, an insatiable desire of new gratifications, a perpetual variety of pastimes, some worse than others; these are the sweets, which the world holds out to us. Are these capable of contenting thee? When thou canst

canst enjoy them, dost thou feel a real satisfaction? And what satisfaction they do yield, is it not every moment disturbed by remorse and disquietude, which thou canst not absolutely suppress? But even couldst thou suppress and totally banish them, wouldst thou not continually feel a void in thyself? Wouldst thou not in time grow out of conceit with these pleasures, however diversified? What is it then that can link thee to them?

This is not the whole: thou art delighted with enjoyments, riches and honours: and these enjoyments, these riches and honours, what are they? A continual spring of uneasiness and fear, the cause of remorse, a galling slavery. There would be some reason for closing with them, if, amidst all their troubles, the possession of them was to be perpetual; if they could advantage us in the next life: but the same stroke, which puts an end to our life, spoils us of every favourite object, and we find ourselves quite bare of good works. Pleasures, honours and  
riches

riches are then out of the question : at the fatal instant, when we are to leave those perishable goods for ever, they only aggravate our grief and terror. Then, O my soul, how canst thou be so inseparably fond of transitory enjoyments and pleasures, which, besides their bitter mixtures, must be torn away from thee in an instant? What a folly is it, to place thy happiness in sufferings, and sufferings leading thee to utter ruin! What is thy comfort under any evils which befall thee? Doubtless, the hope of seeing an end of them, the hope of seeing them succeeded by some happy occurrence. What strange blindness is it then to close with that which makes thee eternally miserable, with that which cannot make thee happy, with that which thou must soon quit! For, after all, self-love only considered, can any one thus resolve on his misery? Ah! instead of expecting from the enjoyments and pleasures of this world, a solacement, a delight, which they cannot give, apply thyself rather to secure a happy eternity by  
good

good works; that is the only true enjoyment, the most sublime pleasure.



THIRDLY,

After DEATH.

**A**FTER having wasted our time in sensual gratifications, after being by death separated from every thing that was dear to us, lastly, after having paid the tribute to God and nature, what are our expectations? Even they who do not hold the immortality of the soul, who value themselves on not believing that there is a God, punishing guilt and rewarding virtue; or who at least affect to be of that execrable opinion; those very persons, I say, cannot forbear shuddering at the approach of that instant, when they are to appear before their judge, before that inexorable judge, whose justice they have braved: and their agony and the acknowledgment extorted from them by their situation, that they now perceive truths, which, when in health, they made it their business



business to decry, these declare that after death comes the judgment, that every soul, on its separation from the body which it dwelled in here, is to stand before the judgment-seat of God, now no longer a father of mercy, seeking the salvation of his creatures; but an inflexible judge, as little to be moved, as to be imposed on.

What will be thy horror, O my soul, at that tremendous instant, if wholly abandoning thyself to pleasures, thou hast taken no care to ingratiate thyself with thy judge? Consider the terror with which thou wilt be overwhelmed. On one side, the devil loudly accusing thee, impatient to have thee in his power; and, on the other, the sight of thy past crimes, of the graces given to thee, and by thee neglected; hell gaping to swallow thee, the presence of thy judge, whom thou hast so insolently offended: canst thou stand such a shock? Thou wilt see thyself alone, forsaken by every body. Perhaps, some good works may raise in thee a hope of finding favour; but so small is the number of  
them,

them, that they will not avail to remove the excruciating anxiety thou wilt feel from the uncertainty of thy fate, and of the sentence to be pronounced on thee; an irrevocable sentence, a sentence dictated by righteousness, a sentence not to be mitigated. Couldst thou hope to find favour with thy judge; hadst thou no reproaches to dread from thy conscience; had thy life been such, as to promise a happy futurity: would the countenance of thy judge not strike thee with terror? Couldst thou stedfastly behold the majesty of a just and almighty God? Is it possible to look on him without trembling? Besides, believest thou thyself so perfect, as to be certain of thy destiny? Knowest thou not the strictness of divine justice? Knowest thou not, that what to thee may seem but a slight defect, is, in his eyes, a crime?

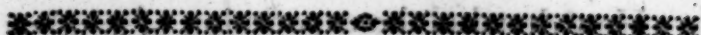
If these objects now strike thee, how much more, when all shall be displayed to thy view, and truth rise up before thee, without any veil.

How

How dreadful the expectation of a judgment, and of such a judgment ! Determine, my soul. After what thou hast been meditating on, canst thou retain any fondness for the world and its pleasures ? Can thy expectations from them make thee forget what thou must expect, after death shall have separated thee from this mortal body ?

No, my God ! I cannot, without the deepest sorrow, think on my fondness for this world, from which I have only vexations to expect ; which I must leave, and beyond which I discern a gloomy futurity. Impress my heart with a dread of thy judgment. May this dread detach it from every vanity, and make it look on earthly enjoyments and pleasures as base and ruinous ; that henceforth it may entirely give itself up to thee, the supreme, the only good ; and, filled with the thoughts of futurity, may it have no other employment, no other desire, than to walk in thy holy law. Amen.

MEDI-



## MEDITATION VI.

## OF DEATH.

FIRST,

RELATIVELY to the WORLD.

**E**VERY man is to die; this is an irrevocable sentence, a tribute to God and nature, payable by all, and without exception, or even delay. The moment is fixed. It may come to-morrow, perhaps this very day: nothing can save us from death. This we are persuaded of; we believe that on it depends our everlasting happiness or misery; we know not the time of it: yet we will not seriously think, nor lay to heart a moment of such concern to us. Why, O my soul, puttest thou far from thee so necessary a thought? Why art thou so averse to allow it some moments, when it may be so salutary to thee?

Why thus loath to forget, for a while,  
a world, which, one day, thou must leave  
for



for ever, and to forget it in promoting thy salvation, in abating the reluctancy, which thou mayest have at leaving it? Therefore, O my soul, commune with thyself, and consider this death, which appears so frightful to thee. But what is it that makes it so frightful? Thy sins, but still more thy fondness for the world. Death, indeed, is terrible, considered relatively to the world. To think that we must leave what was most dear to us, and leave it for ever: a dismal prospect, indeed! We love pleasures, honours, riches; yet we shall be taken from them. We have friends; they also and we must part. To lose every thing endearing, every thing to which we were accustomed, every thing which had engaged our affections during so many years, is, O my soul, something very afflictive! To lose all, to be separated from all, and pass into an eternity of sufferings, this is the height of misery; and to be plunged in it by ourselves, is the height of folly. Yet this is what will happen to thee; this will be thy case, if thou mindest nothing but the

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world;

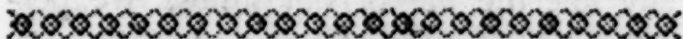
world; and this it is that makes death so shocking to thee. To live in the midst of the world; to live in it, without the least attachment to it; to mind it no more than a fleeting dream; to be amidst pleasures, without tasting them; to think often on eternity; to fulfil the divine laws: these are the preservatives against the fears of death. The world may make the thoughts of death easy, as thick-set with dangers and miseries: the very dissipation of the world is not without its advantages, as recruiting our strength for more assiduously working out our salvation; and, in time, this dissipation tires and thus shews us the emptiness of all earthly pleasures.

In what light does death appear to thee, O my soul? Has it nothing terrible about it? Then happy art thou, if this arises from a purity of conscience; but alas! I see that, on the contrary, thou canst not bear so much as the thought of it. Thou cleavest to the earth; thy affections are taken up with sensitive objects. Come forth

RELATIVELY to the WORLD. 51

forth from darkness to light: thou shalt see that death has nothing in it so terrible. Inure thyself to think of it; and this thought will wean thee from the world.

When the thoughts of it shall be pleasant to thee; when thou shalt come to breathe after that moment, which shall place thee beyond the danger of offending God: then thou wilt see that those horrors with which thy separation from this body seems connected, do not really belong to it, but proceed only from a delight and fondness for this world.



SECONDLY,

RELATIVELY to ONE'S SELF.

**D**EATH has nothing terrible, considered in this sense. He who can look on it as an evil, must be very fond of this body, and he who is afraid of ceasing to live, must be either very short-sighted, or his conscience in a very sad condition. What is life, if we reflect on

it? And with how little concern should we leave it? I know that the idea we form to ourselves of the horrors of death, is frightful; but it is only nature which it can affright. Represent to thyself, O my soul, the course of a mortal distemper, its pains, loathings, emaciations: what is there in them, which affrights thee? The body suffers; and this body, being tender, cannot bear sufferings: these are the only pains. The heat of a violent fever, the decay of strength, the impairment of this machine, terrify our delicacy, and excessive softness. We gradually lose the use of our limbs, we perceive the moment of our end making its approaches, we feel ourselves dissolving; the voice falters, respiration fails, what little natural heat remains, diminishes every instant: this is the condition of a dying person; a state of pain and sorrow, a state, at which nature revolts: yet, O my soul, is it a state which should not affright thee. I know this requires strenuous efforts, and doing great violence to thyself. Yet these sufferings affect only the body; there-



therefore, in this painful moment, consider the dangers of the world, the troubles of life, and thou wilt look on death as a good, as a relief: it is delivering thee from a body, which was ever giving thee disturbances and vexations, and prompting thee continually to offend God, whereas now thou art going to enjoy an eternal happiness. This is the main point; and hence all thy terror: therefore thou feelest thyself guilty, and art afraid thy judge will prove inexorable. Is all confidence then departed from thee? Is all hope utterly extinguished in thee? Alas! knowest thou not his goodness? Knowest thou not that he is desirous thou shouldst be saved; that he is ready to forgive thee all thy sins? But thou shuddereest at a future expiation of thy sins; thou recoilest at the thoughts, that, on leaving this body, thou shalt go and suffer, perhaps, for ages. Since suffer thou must, shouldst thou not prefer those sufferings, which secure thee from damning thyself any longer? Those of this world bear hard on thee, excite violent fits of impatience, extort murmurs from

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thee,

thee, cast thee into despair, and may drive thee to utter ruin; whereas those of a future expiation, by their purifying virtue, will totally remove every cause of fear. On making an atonement for thy sins, thou shalt enjoy God: thy fate then shall be beyond all change; thy sentence has been fulfilled. View therefore thy separation from this body with a steady eye; and if thou darest God's justice, seek in contrition and penance to deserve his clemency.

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THIRDLY,

RELATIVELY to GOD.

**W**HAT tempests, what horrors must the approach of death excite in a soul wholly worldly; a soul, which has minded nothing but pleasures; a soul, which from the moment, as I may say, of its union with the body, has gone on in a course of guilt! If it now thinks that there is a God, a terrible judge, before whom it is going to appear, after a long habitual forgetfulness of him; what pangs must it feel,

feel, seeing itself forced to believe in such a judge, and certain that nothing can exempt it from standing before his judgment-seat? Though it had never committed any crime, though, in the midst of diversions, it should have retained its innocence; yet must the sight of this God, who is all purity and justice, strike it with confusion and terror.

Didst thou never, O my soul, experience what effect the presence of earthly potentates has on a person, who makes his first appearance before them? Hast thou not been disordered with respect and awe at thy being first introduced to those, on whom depended the happiness of that body, which thou so cherishest? Let that teach thee the impressions, which the thought of death must make on those, who have never conversed with God.

On the contrary, how serene is the faithful soul, perpetually inflamed with divine love, which, if the expression be allowable, is become familiar with

its God; which has been loaded with his favours; to which he has condescended by his precious inspirations to make himself known, and often to discourse with it; with whom it has been so frequently united, through the holy Sacrament of the Eucharist; who has made himself to be felt by it, in all those solacements which are a prelibation of the heavenly bliss! It longs to be united to him for ever; it pines after the moment, when those ties, which still bind it to this body, shall be snapped asunder; it passionately rejoices in the thoughts of death, as bringing it face to face with its Beloved. Blessed dispositions! And, O my soul, it is in thy power to make thyself thus happy. Learn to love God, to converse with him, to observe his holy laws; and then, so far from having any fear of death, the thoughts of it will become consolatory and delightful. I perceive already that thou risest above the weaknesses of nature: I perceive that thou seest even something charming in the dissolution of the body. Endeavour then so

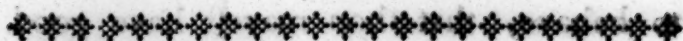
that thou mayest be able to say with the apostle, I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 19



to behave, that thou mayest have good hopes of a holy and blessed death.

O God, who so abundantly sheddest thy graces in the hearts of men, I do not deserve those which I now feel, in thinking on the last hours of my life. My sins, I acknowledge, should affright me; but thy mercy is great: thou wilt forgive them. I am grieved that ever I sinned; and this my grief thou art pleased to accept. O, therefore, make the thoughts of death beneficial to me. May the desire of seeing myself eternally united with thee, wean me from all the transitory enjoyments of the world! Uncertain of the time, may I be ever on my guard, ever watching against so much as the appearance of sin! May the hope of the nearness of my end support me amidst the evils of this calamitous life, and prompt me carefully to lay out for my salvation what space of life may be still remaining to me! Amen.

MEDI-



## MEDITATION VII.

Of the Love of the CREATURES.

F I R S T,

It is I M P E R F E C T.

**O**F all the ties, which link us to the earth, the love of the creatures is, unquestionably, the strongest: it engrosses all our powers; it makes us forget our own concerns, even our very welfare. We cannot conceive that there can be any such thing as happiness out of this enchanting passion. It is a most dangerous rock, a stone of offence, the most difficult obstacle to all our thoughts of conversion: it hinders us from applying ourselves to a good life; it makes us forget death, and chaining us down to the earth, hinders us from preparing for a happy end. Accordingly, it may be said of this love, that it is an imperfect love; for, besides making us mistake our true good, it is the cause of our not so much as desiring

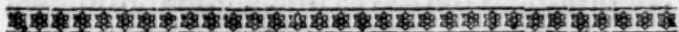
desiring the true happiness of those, with whom we have the closest connections. Examine this love, O my soul! Consider its foundation, its qualities, its scope: thou wilt find it to be all imperfection. It is active and violent; but it arises only from humour, from a complacence in our acquaintance with the creatures, from a natural bias. If thou wilt not acknowledge these truths, reflect on the sorrows, which the loss of one of thy favourite objects gives thee. For instance, a child dies: thou believest an eternity, thou art persuaded he is happy, and yet thou grievest; there is no end of thy lamentations. Whence such an inconsistent behaviour? It is, that as he can now no longer contribute to thy satisfaction and divert thee, thou art very indifferent about his happiness. Such imperfection! But though self-love be what produces in the heart the love of the creature; though it be both its foundation and inseparable attendant, it has still other qualities, which should render it despicable. Reflect, O my soul, on this love, on this fondness; what is it? Is it capable of  
carry-

carrying generosity so far as to do every thing for the creatures whom thou lovest? Couldst thou, without any selfish view, bring thyself to do, what thou doest? The delight thou findest in it, is thy reward; that is thy only motive. Such sordid sentiments! And thou carriest them still farther; for the esteem of these creatures, and the pleasure of loving, are all the scope of this love. Hast thou ever employed thyself in these reflections? Digest them; and thou wilt find, that what I said, is no more than certain truth. But though this love were not imperfect in itself, born as thou art for eternal goods, for heavenly goods; canst thou dwell on earthly objects? Should not the meanness of the object give thee a sense of the meanness of thy affection? Thou knowest, how full all creatures are of imperfections; of course thy fondness for them must be imperfect. Being created to love perfection itself, canst thou not detach thyself from the creatures? Wilt thou always be preferring them to their creator? Again, should not the imperfection of this fondness

ness



ness prevail on thee to renounce it? Oh inconceivable blindness! I could almost call it frenzy. O my soul, rouse and recover thyself from this terrible mistake: be taught by this imperfection, that the creatures are beneath thy love; mourn that is has been so long thrown away on them, and henceforth direct it to a becoming object. The very desire that thou perceivest in thyself to be accounted perfect, should animate thee to such a change. Thou art ever busied about the means of knowledge: know then that this fondness is imperfect; divest thyself of it, and thus fit thyself for the love of God, which alone is perfect, and which alone can make thee happy.



## SECONDLY,

It is TROUBLESOME.

**I**F thou canst still be reconciled to an imperfect love; yet, O my soul, the various troubles of the love of the creatures should disperse the illusion: and on  
closely

closely examining it, and probing it to the bottom, very troublesome wilt thou find it. What perplexities and sollicitudes, to be continually taken up with the creatures, and contriving incessantly ways to find our happiness in them! To dread every moment the loss of a favourite object; to be studious in feeding this fondness, which, in itself, is but a wretched slavery, which is continually disturbing our peace of mind, and thus deprives us of our greatest happiness: these, surely, are real troubles, exclusive of the many disappointments in expectations of goods, which, with premature raptures, we had already enjoyed, in imagination. A business suddenly falls out that we cannot go to a company, where we promised ourselves much entertainment; an intervening duty hinders us from paying a visit, which our hearts were bent on; this sets us a fretting: for when once the love of the creatures has got footing in us, we are no longer masters of our passions; the least obstacle to our desires sets us in an uproar. Thus this imaginary happiness makes us wretched slaves, and  
we

we can no longer do without the creatures; the least instant of solitude is hateful to us, as burthensome: instead of our reflections giving us the least complacency, the least consolation, we are provoked at being obliged to spend a minute or two with ourselves; it is insupportable wearisomeness. O my soul, hast thou never experienced this truth? Hast thou never felt this strong attachment to the creatures? Hast not thou undergone the troubles and vexations of it? How then canst thou prefer it to divine love, which is all repose and felicity? Alas! thou hast been but too deeply immersed in this criminal fondness; and so far from being alienated from it by its chagrins, they have only added fuel to thy fire: thou wast aware of this passion at its birth, and infatuated by the unmixed pleasures, which, at first, it seemed to offer, thou gavest thyself wholly up to it, without the least examination into its inconveniencies. Sometimes, feeling thyself a little galled by its chains, thou hadst thoughts of breaking them; but custom and propensity prevailed.

vailed. Now that thou feelest all the weight and trouble of this love, lay it aside. Were the practice of virtue attended with such disagreeable circumstances, thou woulst not be found walking in its path. What do I say? A few little rubs have already driven thee out of it: yet thou now goest on in a thorny way full of troubles and sorrows, which are not only of no present advantage to thee, but will lead thee to everlasting misery.



### THIRDLY,

It is DANGEROUS.

**I**T is the height of folly to prefer the love of the creatures to the love of God; it being not only a love imperfect and troublesome, but even dangerous and of destructive consequence: yet we are industrious in putting far from us these truths. The bulk of mankind, indeed, look on them as imbecillity, and we will not give ourselves the trouble of a thorough examination. Thou thyself, O my soul,  
feelest



feelest in thee a backwardness to advert to the dangers of this love: thou fearest to be convinced, and to see thyself obliged to forsake it, unless thou art absolutely determined on thy eternal damnation. In the mean time, thou livest quite easy, thinking thyself perfectly safe, because thou hast never reflected on this love: thou hast no notion of it; and thou enjoyest all its sweets (if sweets it has) in the hope of being in the right way. Thou drestest being undeceived: there is no setting thee right, without doing violence to thee. I must lay open to thee the exceeding danger of this love; and since thou hast still some dread of hell, I must avail myself of it, to bring thee back into the ways of salvation. O my soul, the love of the creatures hinders thee from thinking on God. What hast thou to expect from them, which can make thee the least compensation for what thou lovest in drawing on

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thyself his resentment? Thou no longer improvest the graces, which have been given thee; thou forgettest the vanity and transitoriness of this world, the shortness of life, the speed of death's approach, the judgment after death, and the blissful or miserable eternity, which is to be the result of that judgment: but what is still worse, thou flatterest thyself in what thoughts thou hast of death; thou knowest that then thou art to quit all; and thou imaginest that then it will be time enough, to loosen thyself from the world. Canst thou have any certainty, that thou shalt be able so to do at that tremendous instant? Is it not rather more probable, that when it comes to thy leaving every beloved object, thy habitual attachment to them will rather increase than diminish? Besides, with what agitations, what remorses, what horrors will the love of the creature at that time overwhelm thee? Perhaps, thou  
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comfortest thyself in another notion: thou allowest an inordinate love of the creatures to be dangerous; but thine thou imaginest to proceed purely from that, which thou hast for the creator. Great and wonderful are his works; so that not to be smitten with their beauty would be ungrateful. Thy duty enjoins thee to love some particular objects; and it would be a crime in thee to act otherwise, as, perhaps, it is thou whom God intends for the instrument of their salvation. This is thy way of reasoning: but what a deception, what a fallacy! Does this love in any wise carry thee up to the author of nature? Does it make thee more punctual in the discharge of thy duties, more earnest in working out thy salvation? A woful experience proves the contrary. Shun, therefore, a danger, which thou canst not surmount: sever thyself from the creatures, and give thyself wholly to

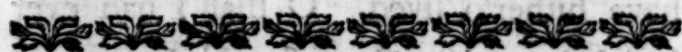
God. Imagine not that this is done only by blending the love of the creatures with that of God. The former are to be forgotten: thou canst not effectually embrace God, without excluding them; thou must suppress all remembrance of what delights thou mayest, perhaps, have felt in them; otherwise thou wilt insensibly be again carried away by them; and the horror of such a relapse no words can express.

O my God, thou seest my weakness; thou knowest that without thee I can do nothing: strengthen my present resolution of henceforth loving only thee. I stand in need of thy grace: without it I cannot deliver myself from the situation wherein I am now entangled. Give me a relish of thy delights; then shall I no longer be taken with the false enticements of the world; then shall I break with all love to the creatures, in which, unhappily, I  
have



have hitherto lived. O that I had ever loved thee only, then should I not have exposed myself to the dangers of eternal ruin. O in thine infinite goodness forgive me! I return to thee with sincerity and grief. O strengthen me against myself! O give me a holy indifference, a contempt of every thing without thee! Amen.





## MEDITATION VIII.

Of our INGRATITUDE towards  
GOD.

FIRST,

GOD'S GOODNESS in our  
CREATION.

**C**OULD it be imagined, that man, who holds every thing of God, whose body is only dust and ashes, and who is capable of doing nothing of himself, should be so ungrateful as to forget the many kindnesses he has received, and even daily to offend him, of whom he holds his being, him who has done every thing for him? Yet this is seen every instant. Consider, O mortal, God's kindness in creating thee;

a kindness, which thou hadst no claim to. Had God any need of thee? What could induce him to create thee? Was any advantage to accrue to him from it? Why did he exalt thee above all other creatures? why indue thee with reason? why give thee a soul? All was mere spontaneous goodness, without obligation or constraint. And, O my soul, such goodness! Without this inestimable kindness thou wouldst be still in non-entity; thou hadst not known the greatness and perfection of that God, who created thee. Consider thy destination, the scope of thy existence: it was to inhabit, for a time, a body, which, in its original state, was to procure thee many gratifications and pleasures; to know and love that supreme Being, who gave thee existence; and afterwards to enjoy an eternity of happiness; to contemplate in heaven the perfections of thy God, and to taste there

such delights, as thy ideas of them must be very imperfect, whilst thou art inclosed in a body made wretched by the transgression of the first man. Glowest thou not with gratitude at all these wonders? Admirest thou not the goodness of thy creator, who, besides giving thee being, has formed this universe for thee? Art not thou continually taken up with thy duty to such a benefactor? Whence is it then, that, amidst so many wonders and kindneses, thou dost not recur to the divine fountain of them? Stupid ingratitude! Canst thou behold the favours of thy God, without being moved by them? Is it possible thou shouldst not love that supreme and infinitely beneficent Being, the giver of all the good gifts thou enjoyest? Canst thou forget him a moment? But besides overlooking his kindneses, besides thy neglect in expressing any gratitude, thou seemest to look upon  
these



these favours, even as no more than thy due : thou seemest to run into all the ways of offending him, from whom thou hast received them : in a word, thou seemest to set him at nought, and even to endeavour, to lessen in the world the honour of this God, so great, so good, so adorable ; an ingratitude, at which thou oughtest to blush, instead of making it thy boast ! When, O my soul, shalt thou be thoroughly convinced of all its atrocity ? When shalt thou come to a due sense of its abomination ? When wilt thou begin sincerely to grieve for it ?



SECOND-



SECONDLY,

GOD'S KINDNESS in our  
REDEMPTION.

SUCH has been God's love to us, that he did not stop at giving us an immortal soul in a perishable body; our innocence having been forfeited by the sin of the first man, a remedy was wanting to our lapsed condition. God might have saved us by which way soever he had pleased; but he would send his only son to redeem us: the word became flesh, and died for our salvation. Did we deserve any such kindness? Or rather did not our ingratitude seem to render us unworthy of any assistance; and did it not rather deserve an exemplary punishment from the hand of vindictive justice? Yet the

the son of God visits the earth, becomes man, and stoops to cloath himself in our flesh; and his life of voluntary labours and hardships he suffers to be put an end to, by the most dreadful and ignominious punishment, by crucifixion. Such his tendernefs to mankind, that he was nine months within Mary's womb: he is born in poverty and distress; he undergoes the pains of childhood, and when, at length, he makes his public appearance, it is to lead a life of sorrows. His miracles stir up envy and rancour, and his doctrine draws persecutions on him. The time prefixed by his goodness comes, that time when his plan for our happiness is to be consummated; the time of his passion. Who can conceive the height of his sufferings? Who can think on them without astonishment and sympathy?

O my soul, how ungrateful art thou towards this gracious God ! For thee he shed all his blood in the most grievous manner : to thy sins was his passion owing ; and daily dost thou renew it by thy repeated commissions of sin. Reflectest thou that the ingratitude of man was his sharpest torture ? Reflectest thou that his greatest grief was to see so many souls to be damned, after what he was doing to save them ? And wilt thou, however, add to his pangs ? Wilt thou destroy thyself for ever ? Canst thou forget such great benefits ? Canst thou prefer the love of the creatures to the love of thy creator ? the love of an insidious enemy, who is deluding thee into eternal misery, to the love of a God, who died for thee ? Is sin then so enchanting as to make thee forget thy redeemer ? Horrid ingratitude after so many kindnesses ! Who can conceive its enormity ? And shalt not thou be moved by it ? Shalt thou



thou not instantly give thyself up to a strict repentance? Is thy insensibility, O my soul, such as not to see thy guilt, not to lament it, not to shed a tear for it? Flow, ye penitential tears, for my offences against so gracious a God! Ye shall henceforth be my only sustenance.





## THIRDLY,

## GOD'S farther KINDNESSES.

**G**OD'S goodness goes still farther: greatly is it to be admired in its long suffering towards a sinner, in what it does to reclaim him; in its joy for his repentance, in its readiness to forgive him, when, filled with a sincere grief, he implores forgiveness. Reflect on this, O my soul! How many favours hast thou received? How many receivest thou still every day? Is not thy preservation a very considerable favour? In an instant, thou mightest sink into the nothing from whence thou camest, did not the almighty hand of God uphold and preserve thee. But carry thy views still farther: see every day accompanied with manifestations of his love.

love. Thou never implorest his succour in vain : he rescues thee from every danger ; and if thou relieft on him never so little, he gives thee victory over the enemies of thy salvation ; he protects thee in adversity ; he upholds thee in the changes and crosses, which, alas ! are so frequent in the world ; he is a light to thy path ; when the edge of affliction cuts deep, he foment the wound with his solacements ; he strengthens thee in trying occasions. But especially consider his attention and wisdom in ordering all things for thy happiness. When he chastises thee, it is with gentleness, and for thy good. If crosses come, they are never above thy strength. When he permits thee to be tempted, it is that thou mayest acquire an addition of merit ; and even if thou yieldest to the temptation, it is that thou mayest be more and more humble under a sense of thy inability. There is nothing he leaves un-  
tried

tried to bring thee back from thy wanderings; he tries mildness and showers down favours on thee; otherwise he chastises thee, his hand lies heavy on thee; yet these scourges are only to reclaim thee to thy duty, and on the least repentance, he drops the rod. And canst thou, after this, forbear loving so gracious a God? Canst thou prefer to him a malignant and corrupted world? Canst thou determinately offend him? Wilt thou never cease from ingratitude? Shall it even increase with every benefit received? Thou wouldst be ashamed to behave thus towards men. Had any one sacrificed himself for me; had any one, with great concern, forewarned me of any dangers, which threaten me; had any one helped to deliver me out of them; such a friend would win my whole soul: I think I should do any thing for him: or could my heart be so base as  
 to



to make light of such kindneſſes, I ſhould at leaſt affect the externals of gratitude, were it only to ſave my character with the public. How then, O my ſoul, canſt thou pride thyſelf in ingratitude towards God? Return to him, beg of him to pardon thee; return to thy duty and acknowledge his many kindneſſes.

O God of all goodneſs, God who load-eſt with thy favours the moſt unworthy of thy creatures, mercifully forgive me my ingratitude! I have hitherto followed the ways of ungodlineſs; I have forgotten him who has done every thing for me: indebted to him as I am, I have offended him habitually: his love I have returned with neglect and diſobedience. How can I preſume to appear before his face? Give me, O Lord, thoſe penitential tears which may waſh away my infection, ſuch tears

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as never dry up; that I may for ever bewail my ingratitude and labour for the future to render myself worthy of thy loving kindness. Amen.



MEDI-

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## MEDITATION IX.

O N D E A T H,

F I R S T,

GOD is GLORIFIED by DEATH.

**T**HE generality of men account death an evil, whilst others forming to themselves an elevating idea of it hold it to be a good : both opinions are true ; and likewise are they false. That death, in which a bad life concludes, is dreadful, as removing us into an eternity of woes ; and, that, on the other hand, which has been preceeded by a pious life, is easy, is full of joy, as introducing us into eternal happiness. Thus, O my soul, death is neither a good nor an evil ; it derives its character from life ; so that it is this

life which is to form thy happiness or misery. Still wilt thou not bring thyself to welcome the instant of separation: but consider the glory it brings to God. It is allowed that a constant patience under a painful disease does him infinite honour; and that it is a kind of martyrdom extremely acceptable to him. Death, when received with love, humility and patience, constitutes the essence of this sacrifice: it is then that man honours the immortality of God, and acknowledges his absolute dominion, by a resigned acquiescence in the destruction of his existence.

We, one and all, own to have received our being from God, and that to him we owe our station in the world; but it is not till death, that we discharge this debt: then we return to him the life, which he has given us. Thus dying men may be said to be so many victims sacrificed to  
his



his glory: and shalt not thou, O my soul, account it an advantage, a privilege, to promote the glory of God, to be a victim to it? Does not this title animate thee? Though death be a penalty of sin, consequently an infamatory brand on human nature, and an involuntary evil; thou canst make it voluntary, and in thy free submission to this decree of divine justice, thou contributest to God's glory. Think on this very carefully; it is all the creature can do; it is of the highest advantage to it; it is what it should be continually breathing after; it is a happiness, in which it should exult before-hand: yes, its desire should be, to die a thousand times in a day.

This, O my soul, is one of the effects of death; and should it not make thee love, prize and desire it? Certainly: view it continually in this light, and easily wilt

## 86 GOD'S GLORIFICATION, &c.

thou submit to a separation from thy body, to that separation, which appears to thee so dismal, to that separation, in itself so painful, and at the bare thought of which thy spirit fails. It will then be to thee a subject of exultation, as, thereby, thou mayest advance the glory of God, of that God who has created thee, of that God who has redeemed thee, lastly, of that God who has crowned thee with his bounties.



SECOND-

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SECONDLY,

DEATH is a SATISFACTION to the  
JUSTICE of GOD.

**T**HERE is in the world a set of people, so lost to all reason, that only their being obliged to do a thing, makes them to detest it; they cannot bear the thoughts of it. Death itself would not give them much uneasiness, were it not appointed by an irrevocable decree; but there being no exemption from it, it is to them a subject of aversion and terror. Art thou one of these, O my soul? or rather art thou sensible of this precious sacrifice, whereby the justice of God is satisfied? Then prize it: this satisfaction should make thee desirous of death, should represent it to thee in an agreeable light,

should make thee find a pleasure in it. Indeed, how canst thou better satisfy divine justice? This is the most perfect way. As all our sins indisputably proceed from pride, avarice and sensuality; death avenges God on those three enemies: thus it is a satisfaction the most suitable to the affronts put on him. Survey, O my soul, the punishment of pride in the dissolution of the body. Can there be any greater abasement? This body, which was the principle of thy pride, is now all rottenness; too nauseous for sight, it is hidden under the earth, where it will be reduced to dust and ashes, and trodden under foot. Thou, indeed, O my soul, shalt not die; but didst thou cease to exist, how shouldst thou see and be sensible of thy abasement? Thy mortification at returning to the nothing whence thou hast been taken, would not be like that of beholding the ghastly decay and death  
of



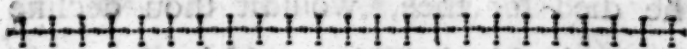
of this body, to which thou hast been so intimately united: and it is not thy pride only, which shall be punished; death will be no less afflictive to thy avarice. Consider, O my soul, the absolute loss of all possessions: as yet it is nothing, whilst the life, which thou enjoyest, is thy greatest good, thy supreme wealth. But thou must be divested of this body, the mouldering away of which will reduce thee to the utmost indigence, and, at the same time, will punish thy sensuality: all those objects which tempt thee to crimes, those objects which thou enjoyest with such excess, that very body which thou idolizest; thou must leave, leave and remove far from them, into an unknown country. If it be true, that banishment is worse than death, what a stroke will this separation be to thee! Lay this to heart, O my soul, and thou shalt see that the justice of God can have no greater satisfaction. This thought  
should

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should be even ravishing to thee; for death, being the greatest suffering, thou canst, by a sincere welcome of it, do more in an instant, than all the anchorets and penitents, if thou art, withal, really concerned and grieved for thy faults: and this thought should make thee desirous of death, should make thee passionately wish for the moment of offering up the most absolute satisfaction to the justice of God, which is in thy power.



THIRD-



THIRDLY,

**DEATH** is a MARK of LOVE and  
**GRATITUDE.**

**D**EATH, besides being the chief penance, is likewise the greatest mark of love to the Lord, which can be given: for, O my soul, can we more strongly express our love for a friend, than in being willing to die for him? The son of God by laying down his life for us, has acquired a very valid title to ours: since he himself has died, who would not die? It is a sacrifice of gratitude due to him: his love requires from us what his justice has not allowed us to refuse him. He died, O my soul, and he died for thee; wouldst thou exempt thyself from dying, when he has died? and as  
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92. DEATH is a Mark of LOVE

he died for thee, wouldst thou decline dying for him? This would be the extremity of ingratitude: love is to be requited only by love. Our life indeed is nothing in comparison of that of Jesus Christ; but by being made an offering of love, it acquires an inestimable value. He who gives up his life to God, may be said to give up all without reserve or exception. What an honour, what a delight is this? This it is which makes his death so very precious. O my soul, what a happiness is it, that thou canst testify thy love and gratitude to thy Saviour? What sacrifice more effectual for this than the sacrifice of the dearest good! This should make thee to pant after death, this should make thee esteem it an advantage and honour: this thought formerly supported the christians, under the most excruciating martyrdom. Though the time of martyrdom be passed, thou should be a martyr in thy disposition,



position, thou shouldst long for that moment, when thou shalt give the highest proof of thy love to God ; for all the sacrifices thou canst make to him in this life put together, do not come up to this. Therefore, O my soul, call out in a holy transport : O death, since thou hast been overcome by the Saviour, since thy resting place has been in his bosom, thou hast no longer any thing dreadful about thee : my heart panteth after thee, thou art the chief object of my flaming desires, as through thee I shall testify my love to God, and pass into the regions of perfect felicity.

Lord, who knowest my heart, who holdest it in thy hand, who art the spring of all its motions, who, inspirest me with these devout transports, grant me, I beseech thee, the necessary graces for a happy progress to that moment, which is  
eter-

94 DEATH is a Mark of LOVE, &c.

eternally to unite me with thee. O enable me to overcome the temptations which I may have to undergo at my last hour; that my death may be an acceptable sacrifice. I offer thee up my life from this present time: would I could die this very instant! but since thou hast determined the length of my days, be pleased at least to accept such my desire; let it be a preparation for that sacrifice which I make in all the sincerity of my heart, and which I wish I could make in reality a thousand times every day.

O God, by whom death was overcome,  
O make my death happy, that it may introduce me to an eternity of happiness!  
Amen.

F I N I S.



